

Violence against women continues to challenge every country on the planet. Legal recourse for survivors, however, varies dramatically across countries and has been correlated with both the strength of a country's judicial system and the level of empowerment and equality women enjoy. While critical gaps in data prevent true comparative analysis, this map displays the percentage of women in each nation's parliament, and highlights a broad spectrum of countries to illustrate the relationships between systems of justice and violence against women.

# A Global Look at Women: Power, Justice and Violence

**CANADA:** The government reported 74 sexual assaults and one domestic violence related homicide per 100,000 persons in 2004. Its family violence initiative aims to eliminate systemic violence against women and advance women's rights.

**SWEDEN:** In 2006, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention reported 18,800 cases of assault against women. Authorities apprehended and prosecuted abusers and provided victims with protection from future contact with perpetrators.

**KYRGYZSTAN:** Although prohibited by law, rural inhabitants continue the traditional practice of kidnapping women and girls for forced marriage. Cultural traditions discouraged victims from going to authorities; in 2006 ten cases were reported.

**RUSSIA:** Russian child pornography remains a major problem both domestically and internationally. The law does not define child pornography and lacks criminal penalties for its possession, limiting investigative means and convictions.

**UNITED STATES:** In 2006, the Department of Justice reported that 1 out of 6 women in the US had been raped at some point in her life. Only 19% of survivors had reported the rape to the police, with 37% of reported rapes leading to criminal prosecution.

**HAITI:** Despite regular reports that local armed thugs frequently raped and harassed girls and women, police rarely arrested the perpetrators or investigated the incidents. As of 2006, no government sponsored programs existed for victims of violence.

**CHAD:** Despite efforts by authorities to curtail the practice, the National Institute of Statistics, Economic and Demographic Studies reported in 2004 that 45% of women had undergone female genital mutilation. The lack of specific penalties in the penal code hinders prosecution of FGM practitioners.

**VIETNAM:** Poor women and teenage girls are at serious risk of human trafficking. Though the government arrested hundreds of traffickers in 2006, traffickers continue to entrap women with false advertising, debt bondage, the confiscation of documents, and the threat of deportation.

**MEXICO:** Annually, approximately 1,600 women are killed nationwide, resulting primarily from domestic violence. In 2006, Mexico passed a comprehensive bill aimed at preventing violence against women.

**COSTA RICA:** Though domestic violence is a growing problem, the law against it establishes strong victim-assistance mechanisms, including domestic violence training for new police and a mandate for hospitals to report domestic violence cases.

**RWANDA:** In 2007, Rwanda's police headquarters in Kigali trained counselors on gender-based violence (GBV) and created a hotline and exam room for survivors. The headquarters serves as a flagship office for the GBV outreach programs now operating in each of Rwanda's 62 police stations.

**UNITED ARAB EMIRATES:** According to a 2005 UAE University study, as many as 66% of all women permanently residing in the UAE had been subjected to domestic abuse. Though abuse in general is a criminal offense, male guardians have the legal right to use violence to discipline the women and children in their family.

**PAPAU NEW GUINEA:** Although domestic violence is highly prevalent, authorities view it as a private matter, so few survivors press charges. Some communities settle incidents of rape through material compensation rather than criminal prosecution.

**COLOMBIA:** Women and girls comprise the majority of displaced persons in Colombia and are particularly vulnerable to rape and sexual mutilation committed by renegade paramilitary members and guerrillas. In 2006, reports documented over 14,000 such incidents.

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO:** Brutal rape has become a weapon of war employed methodically by armed groups. Victims and experts cited widespread impunity as the main reason sexual violence continues; most survivors do not have sufficient confidence in the justice system to pursue formal legal action.

**SAUDI ARABIA:** There are no laws specifically outlawing domestic violence. According to the Saudi National Society of Human Rights, women continue to suffer unreported abuse at the hands of their husbands, fathers, and brothers and violence against women is widely tolerated by the community.

**PAKISTAN:** While precise data is limited, family-related disputes will sometimes end in a women's death or disfigurement from acid or burning. In 2003, the Punjab Provincial Assembly passed a resolution opposing acid attacks.

**THAILAND:** In 2000, the Commission on Women's Affairs estimated that approximately 20 percent of those exploited in prostitution were children. The law forbids child prostitution and subjects customers who patronize child prostitutes to criminal sanctions.

**NEW ZEALAND:** Though 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence, violent crimes against women are regularly prosecuted. In 2005, the government funded a task force to eliminate family violence; the resulting programs are experiencing high rates of participation.

**ARGENTINA:** One provincial legislature recently passed its first domestic violence law, written to include physical, psychological, and economic violence. The new law has led to a significant increase in the number of complaints filed.

**Percentage of Women in Parliament**  
Categories based on standard deviation; mean = 17%.

- 0% to 2% (less than -1.5 Std. Dev.)
- 3% to 11% (-1.5 to -0.50 Std. Dev.)
- 12% to 21% (-0.50 to 0.50 Std. Dev.)
- 22% to 31% (0.50 to 1.5 Std. Dev.)
- 32% to 41% (1.5 to 2.5 Std. Dev.)
- 42% to 47% (greater than 2.5 Std. Dev.)
- Not applicable or no data available

Note: The highlighted countries were selected based on the percentage of women holding seats in the country's parliament and do not reflect any measure of violence against women.

Names and boundary representation are not necessarily authoritative.

**Notes on Data & Methodology**

1. Many challenges face researchers attempting to accurately account for violence against women. Survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) may receive little legal benefit, risk stigmatization, and further endanger themselves by reporting the violence they experienced. As such, GBV is often hard to account for and underreported. Where official data is lacking, US Government researchers have

vetted secondary data sources for reliable information. Additionally, while data collection on justice systems is not as sensitive an issue, statistics meaningful for cross-country comparisons are not readily available.

2. On average, approximately 17% of women hold seats in parliament across the globe and the map depicts deviations in either direction of this statistical

norm. Highlighted countries were selected for having either the highest or lowest percentage of women in parliament for their geopolitical region. Exceptions to this rule are: the United States and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which were selected, respectively, to emphasize the US's own challenges and draw attention to the use of rape as a tool of war.

**Sources**

Percentage of Women in Parliament, Human Development Report, United Nations, 2007/2008  
Country Highlights, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, United States Government, 2006 & 2007  
US Data, NIJ Special Report, United States Government, 2006

